



Michigan Messenger

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Presidential Report



Gary VanHoogstraten
President

I recently watched a special documentary on HBO. The subject was Wal-Mart: The high cost of low prices. You talk about an eye opener, this surly was one. I now, more than ever, reinforced my views regarding this store, and made my thoughts and feelings even more resolve that I will never step foot in any Wal-Mart.

They did interviews with many employees and managers from Wal-Mart; which one was a former CEO from Wal-Mart. One of Wal-Mart's slogans is "Do More for Less". How many times do you hear this perception in our own work areas, especially in smaller offices by employees working off the clock? It was quoted that Wal-Mart has no overtime. In fact, employees working over 40 hours had their times changed to reflect only 40 hours. Does this sound familiar? Wal-Mart is also saying that 74% of their employees are full time. But what they fail to tell you is that they consider those working 28 hours a week full-time employees. You know they do not get benefits unless they are working 40 hours per week. Wal-Mart has also been fined some 11 million dollars for hiring illegal immi-

grants. They interviewed an African-American female, who was interested in and was applying for a managerial position. She was told to study these questions and when she came back for an interview, they would ask her the questions. In her interview, she answered the questions well, but they told her they could not hire her. She said "Why, because I am a black female"? The manager in question openly told her that is was for that reason exactly why he couldn't.

They also interviewed a former IGA grocery store owner about what happened to his store. He told us that as soon as Wal-Mart opened its doors, his business dropped so bad that he eventually had to close up the store. In Wal-Mart's factories in China at their factories, they have housing for their workers. When you live in these places, you have to pay rent and utilities. If you choose not to live there and find a place elsewhere, you still have to pay the rent. In these factories, the employees get \$3.00 per day. In Bangladesh, workers have to brush their teeth with ashes, because they can't afford tooth paste. When you work in these factories, you can never tell about bad working conditions or you would get fired. The average salary for a Wal-Mart employee in the US is about \$13,861 per year. The Wal-Mart family gives approximately 1% to charities.

I have been told that the prices at a Wal-Mart are lower than many of the other chains in the

US. Maybe some of what I have showed you explain why; however, after doing some research on-line that it isn't the truth. I can tell you that it is almost impossible to ever get a Union in Wal-Mart. I urge all of you to think the next time you are about ready to pull into the parking lot of a Wal-Mart.

We are in the middle of the winter season. It is hard to believe that the temperature the next few days will be in the 50's. We are only a few months until our convention. Mike Long has most of the details on our web site. Harold soon will be getting out the convention call. The hotel has been working with us to get the final touches in place. I will be sending out letters to all local presidents soon. As soon as Harold gets the credentials back, we will be sitting down and assigned the delegates to committees. I will close for now, hoping all of you had a safe and enjoyable holiday season. I will see you all soon.

Until Next Time,

Gary Van Hoogstraten



Secretary's Writings



Harold Juhl
Executive Secretary

This article will be short and sweet. The State Convention is approaching fast. Just a reminder that I will need the resolutions from all the locals, along with the convention report articles from the State officers not later than April 15, 2008.

I will be sending out a form for all Local presidents to fill out for the upcoming convention, in addition to the credentials. By obtaining a list of your delegates, it will assist in the process of assigning delegates to the various committees at the convention. I hope to see everyone in May and I know that the host local will do a great job putting on this upcoming convention.

Also, if any officer needs supplies to perform your duties, please contact me at your earliest convenience. (e.g. paper, envelopes, etc.)

In Solidarity,

Harold

**Articles for the
March/April 2008
Edition of the
Michigan
Messenger need to
be submitted to the
Editor not later
than March 15,
2008.**

MPWU State Convention

Only a few more months before the 2008 Michigan Postal Workers Union Convention takes place in Grand Rapids in May. Members at Large, if you would like to see something changed in the National Agreement, National Constitution, State Constitution, or even the new National LMOU, please let us know. Now is the time for change, and it starts with you. Please write me and let me know your concerns in this regard, so we can make inroads to having these things changed for the better.

In this edition of the Michigan Messenger I have placed the convention call. Please take a moment to review the article of the constitution that covers the convention. If you need to view the entire constitution, please contact me and I will forward you out a copy of it.

Michigan Messenger

Wow. This Messenger is stuffed full. When putting it together this time, I was looking at all the information that was out there, and tried to put everything I could to keep you, the member, informed. Sorry about the information overload, hopefully next edition will be smaller.

Will Management Ever Learn?

As an Automation clerk during the week at work, I constantly see all the lame brained ideas that management comes up with first hand. In the Greater Michigan District, it seems as if it is constant.

The latest happens to be one of the funniest. This week, management got it into their heads to retrofit our DBCS with this long PVC pipe attached to Stacker #2. The goal, we had been told, was to ensure that since only two inches of mail would be able to go into stacker two before the "full stacker" alarm is sounded that more mail would not be left. However, what management fails to take into consideration that the handling of mail stayed the same. When mail goes into a stacker, it goes into a tray. The issues lies when the tray is not taken away, not the mail in the stacker. I guess someone had to justify their Pay for Performance by submitting

The Long and Short of It



Michael A. Long
Editor

an idea that had no merit, but looked good on paper. Knowing Postal mentality as we do, that must have been a promotion idea for sure.

Updated Local Information

I have just completed my annual update of the membership list for the state. I would like to thank each of you who have kept me abreast of changes in your local throughout the year. It makes it quite easier.

However, one thing I fail to receive is any changes to local leadership. If you have had any changes to your local executive board within the past two years, please let me know, so I may update our records, the website, etc.

In closing, I hope to see as many of you as possible at the upcoming convention in my hometown of Grand Rapids. As the co-Chair of this event, when the convention proceedings are done during the day, we have numerous activities to keep you busy during the evening. Currently planned is a Rampage Game, Whitecaps Game, Bowling, and that is just the first two night.

Until next time, I remain ready to assist you. Please feel free to write or call.

Yours in Solidarity,

Mike

Legislative Report



Regina Favors
Legislative
Director

Happy 2008 brothers and sisters! I hope everyone had a blessed and wonderful holiday season and are ready and braced for the many challenges this New Year will bring. When this issue goes to press the primary elections will have come and gone. I know many folks had a problem with and many were disgusted, turned off by the whole process, but I hope it did not stop you from voting.

On primary day, I along with union members all across the state will be out to insure that (IF the RTW petitioners are out there) people know what they are signing. Hope-

fully our presence and information we have will be enough of a deterrent. We know that this issue is going to be an extremely hot and heavy one for us and that this will just be one battle in the fight. I really had intended on making this article mostly about the primary and the (race) as it is for the White House but as I listen to folks talk about what (which) issues are most important to them and which particular candidate said or did not say something, I think I would just like to remind or drive home the point of all of us really listening and HEARING what they are AND/OR are not REALLY saying.

We all know that campaign promises are just that (PROMISES) and candidates (in any election) will say whatever they think you want to hear in order to get elected. What we must do is sort through the junk and listen to the plan(s) and then vote accordingly. We should think about what has been going wrong/right with our country, union, board or whatever and have we held those that we voted for accountable. Have they changed things for the better or have they gotten worse. Has there been any unity brought about or has there been more discord, unrest, animosity and just plain disregard for what is right and just? If not, WHY not? These are the questions we really must ask ourselves. I say all of this to say that I know that none of us are all one party or the other but that is what makes us a part of the great picture. It takes all of us making strides toward the common goal of equality, justice (equal), peace, unity, need I go on? This does not only apply to the race to the White House as I am sure you can see. There are always going to be people who are greedy, power struck, self-serving and/or just down right dictatorish (for lack of a better word), who seek and gain offices/roles of leadership. I am sure you have all at one time or another had one of these type people as a 204B, foreman, supervisor, manager or even the postmaster. You know the one who changes things JUST BECAUSE THEY HAVE THE TITLE!

The ones that we must represent our members against who just because they have the position (at that time) decide they are going to issue warnings, disciplinary actions etc. just to show whose boss! Or maybe you have worked for the one who lets their "friends" have coffee and talk/break all day while they harp on you to **GET THE JOB DONE!** Maybe

you know the kind who thinks or tries to act like your parents, remember "because I said so"? (smile) Anyway what I am trying to get at is the fact that it does not matter what party (political) or group that you belong to, it behooves us all to try and bring about the necessary changes that will best benefit ALL of us.

While writing this article, there has been something more pressing on my mind. It deals with the apathy that we see day in and day out. We either seem to think that our voice and/or vote doesn't matter and that we are just powerless to change the actions of the people we have voted into office. While there are those of us that may not agree with certain actions of any one individual, I strongly believe that actions mean more than inaction. This holds true in whatever kind of arena you might be in; whether it is a government election, union election, board election..... We don't have to be a Democrat or Republican, to be angry, disillusioned, disheartened or whatever. But the only sure way to even attempt to change or better the situation is to use your voice in the election process. There are good and bad Democrats, Republicans, Clergy, and/or leaders in general of everything and so forth and so on. This and research on any candidate is what I base my vote on. I am in the over 50 crowd and (for me) while not everything was ALWAYS rosy under democrats, it was always so much worse under republicans. Michigan, (under Blanchard/under Engler as one for instance). Keep in mind please this is just MY OPINION!

In closing, I would ask that you contact your legislator in the house to ask that they co-sponsor HR 4236 regarding the Anti-Subcontracting bill that was introduced by Rep Lynch. This type of legislation is what is needed to stop management from taking our work from us and giving it to someone else (and sometimes lining their own pockets in the process).

On a final note I hope everyone takes at least some time out to reflect and remember Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as it is 40 years later and the struggle yet continues. (Katrina, Jena 6, Genarlo Wilson.....) As Dr. King said "OUR SCIENTIFIC POWER HAS OUTRUN OUR SPIRITUAL POWER. WE HAVE GUIDED MISSILES AND MISGUIDED M E N " (s t r e n g t h t o l o v e , 1 9 6 3)

Peace & solidarity,

Gina

P.S. Congratulations to Flint on the temporary halt of the their jobs going to the new MetroPlex in Pontiac. Way to Go!

AAUW
APWU

Veteran's Report



John Smeeke
Veterans Director

GULF WAR VETERANS

The Department of Veterans' Affairs has extended the presumptive period for undiagnosed illness in Gulf War Veterans' to December 31, 2011, in order to provide

more time for scientific and medical research regarding diseases and illnesses that may be related to service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations. What this means is that, if you don't feel as good as you did before you left for your tour of duty in the Southwest Asia theater of operations, and you haven't felt right since your return from that area, you need to contact a County Veterans' Representative and let them know. **DO NOT CONTACT THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.** Contact your County Veterans Representative and let THEM do the paperwork and myriad of other things that go along with the process known as "FILING A CLAIM." Don't wait, just do it!

U.S.S. INGERSOLL

The USS Ingersoll (DD 652) operated during the Vietnam Era as a Navy destroyer gunship conducting fire support missions along the coast of the Republic of Vietnam for military ground operations. In addition to coastal duty, the USS Ingersoll traveled up the Saigon River on October 24th and 25th of 1965 to fire on enemy bases. C&P Service has reviewed the ship's deck logs, located at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), and confirmed this service on the "inland waterways" of the Republic of Vietnam. As a result, the presumption of herbicide exposure, as described in 38 CFR 3.307(a)(6), can be extended to any crewmember who served aboard the vessel on these dates. Contact your County Veterans' Representative to start the

CLAIMS FILING PROCESS. Herbicide exposure has shown links to many different types of diseases and illnesses. Get it checked out now, if you were aboard the Ingersoll on the above mentioned dates.

NEW BOSS

"A veteran should not need a lawyer to figure out what his benefit is, and he should not need a lawyer to get it," said retired Army Lt. Gen. (Dr.) James Peake at his Dec. 5 confirmation hearing to be the new VA secretary. The nomination of Peake, a former Army surgeon general who twice was wounded while serving as an infantry officer in Vietnam, is moving swiftly toward confirmation. He assured senators that their priorities for veterans were also his, including reducing bureaucratic delays and red tape. Peake said he wants to smooth the transition of war wounded and other disabled veterans from military health care to the VA medical system. He also is committed to improving access to care and to speeding claims processing for all eligible veterans. He wants to improve detection and treatment of combat stress disorders and traumatic brain injury. Though "gratified that the VA has nearly 3000 new claims people on board or in training," Peake said he wants to make the system less complex, more understandable and better supported with information technology.

Peake, 63, promised to speak up if the VA budget is insufficient to support promised programs and benefits. (P.S. Just got word that it's official, the U.S. Senate has confirmed James B. Peake to be the next Secretary of Veterans Affairs).

KLEENEX TIME

J. Russell Coffey, the oldest known surviving U. S. Veteran of World War I, has died. He died December 20, 2007. He was born September 1, 1898. Mr. Coffey enlisted in the Army while he was a student at Ohio State University in October of 1918. A month later the Allied powers and Germany signed a cease-fire agreement. He did not see any action overseas, and was discharged a month after the war ended. He had a remarkable memory and was independent, his daughter, Betty Jo Larsen, said. He drove his car until he was 104, and he lived in his own home until a year later. His wife, Bernice, whom he married in 1921, died in 1993. Can you imagine being born in the 19th century and living through the whole 20th Century, and 7 years into the 21st Century? We can only imagine the changes Mr. Coffey saw in his lifetime.

SUICIDE

H. R. 327, the "Joshua Omvig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act," now P.L. 110-110 directs the Secretary of the DVA (department of veterans affairs) to develop and carry out a comprehensive program designed to reduce the incidence of suicide among Veterans'. A recent report stated that 18 Veterans a day, yes a day, were committing suicide because they could not get help from the D.V.A.

COMP INCREASE

A 2.3% compensation increase was signed into law by Mr. Bush with an effective date of December 01, 2007. This will also give a raise to dependency allowances and statutory awards. The VA anticipates the annual allowance for clothing will be raised August 01, 2008. For those who fight for it, freedom has a flavor the protected will never know.

PROTECTION COST'S

The high cost of protection for our troops keeps going up, but the ratio of wounded to kill is far less than



(Continued from page 4)
Veterans Report Continued

in previous wars. Here are the cost's to outfit a soldier and the ratio of wounded to killed in action; World War II \$170.00 to outfit soldiers with a combat belt with equipment, a steel helmet and liner, leather combat boots, spats, and an M1 rifle, with ratio of 1 killed to every 2.40 wounded or 41%; Vietnam was \$1,112.00 to outfit soldiers with load carrying equipment, a steel helmet with liner, a flak vest jungle combat boots, and an M16A1 rifle, with a ratio of 1 to 3.12 or 32%; Current Operations are at \$17,471.00 to outfit a soldier with night and thermal scopes, Kevlar helmet, close combat optics, body armor, fire retardant gloves, knee and elbow pads, tan combat boots, safety glasses, and an M4 modular carbine, while the ratio is 1 to 8.3 or 12%. Don't forget that these numbers are based on number of soldiers served or serving.

World War II had 11.3 million soldiers served; Vietnam had 2.3 million soldiers served; Current Operations have 766,066 soldiers serving.

PURPLE HEART STAMP

I need some help. I've written to several of the Veterans' organizations asking them to ask their membership to start writing their Congressional and Senatorial leaders to support action to make the Purple Heart Stamp one of the Postal Services FOREVER STAMPS. Now here's where you come in. I am asking you to start writing letters, or start sending e-mails, or both, to your local politicians, mostly on the Federal level, and ask them to support this idea. Contact Mr. Potter in D.C. and ask him to push the issue. But let's get the PURPLE HEART STAMP out there as a FOREVER STAMP.

John

Clerk Craft Report



Richard Blake
Clerk Craft Director

ance was sustained. The remedy in this case, which is going to be pretty complicated to implement, will be in the neighborhood of \$100,000! Our National Business Agent Lynn Pallas-Barber was the advocate on the case, and she did a marvelous job presenting all of the evidence and dealing with some "less than truthful" testimony by certain management representatives (I want to win grievances just as much as anyone does, but I will never be able to understand how managers can blatantly lie under oath and still be able to sleep at night). Her post-hearing brief on the case was exceptionally well done. The award addressed management's self-serving concept of "triggers" which allegedly justify the employment of casuals, and in general found them not convincing. What made this award particularly gratifying for me is the fact that this was going to be Ann Arbor's one and only shot at arbitrating this issue, since Ann Arbor is a 200 man-year office and the "in lieu of" language is no longer applicable per the 2006 contract. If anyone would like a copy of the arbitration award or Lynn's excellent brief, please let me know, and I'll be happy to send you a copy. For those of you who are in offices smaller than 200 man-years, please don't accept management's rationalizations for hiring casuals; we can win these cases when they're properly documented and presented, so let's do it!

Scanning of incoming parcels - over the years I've been seeing an increase in management personnel scanning incoming delivery confirmation parcels (specifically, the "arrived at unit" scan), particularly in the Detroit district, which seems to have more or less deleted Article 1.6 from the contract altogether (thank you so much, Ms. Rettinhouse). They've offered various rationalizations, such as "it's being done for testing purposes", "this is for data analysis of our transportation network", "the 'Scanning Improvement Plan' mandates that we do it", etc. Well, as it turns out there's a pretty good body of arbitration awards on this issue, mostly in our favor. In case K00C-4K-C-02221107 (award date 2005),

Great job, Lynn! - On December 17, Arbitrator Donald Sugerman rendered his decision in the "casuals in lieu of" case which we filed in Ann Arbor in early 2006, and the grievance

Arbitrator Vaughn sustained the Union's grievance, stating "the Postal Service violated Article 1.6 of the National Agreement when managers sorted and removed delivery confirmation parcels and scanned them...management shall cease and desist from sorting and scanning delivery confirmation mail under the Scanning Improvement Efficiency Plan and shall assign such duties to members of the bargaining unit". In that case, the Postal Service tried to use the national award from Arbitrator Snow (AC-N-6922) against us, since that award limited the scope of what could generally be termed exclusively bargaining unit work - but Arbitrator Vaughn wasn't buying it. In his review of the arbitral history on this issue, he stated "I note that there is strong arbitral support for prohibiting management from performing scanning duties, even for testing purposes alone, notwithstanding arbitrator Snow's award". He then went on to cite some of the better examples of the arbitral history on this issue, such as the decision of Arbitrator Puette (F00C-4F-C-02102118), where he stated that under all circumstances but the five exceptions listed in Article 1.6, scanning barcodes for delivery confirmation was bargaining unit work. In case H98C-4H-C-00100947, Arbitrator Hoffman also found in favor of the Union, stating that none of the 5 exceptions listed in Article 1.6 were applicable to their "excuse" for doing this work, and that it should be performed by bargaining unit employees. Similar findings can be found in G00C-4G-C-02121493 (Arbitrator Dorshaw) and G00C-4G-C-02115003 (Arbitrator Otis King). In his conclusion, paraphrasing from the old national arbitration award from Arbitrator Garrett, Vaughn stated "management's right to impose efficiency cannot be achieved solely by having managers perform work which would otherwise belong to the bargaining unit". I would ask that those of you in larger associate offices or city stations review these awards, and if you see management personnel performing these scans, file a grievance!

In Solidarity

Richard

Maintenance Memo



Jane Duggan
Maintenance Director

At the Central Region Maintenance Conference in Minnesota, as well as at the multi-craft in Vegas, I spent some time teaching the In-service MSS process. I emphasized the importance of maintenance officers and stewards monitoring the existence of In-service registers. These registers provide an avenue for APWU members of all crafts to get into and/or move up in the maintenance craft.

The EL-304 states that maintenance and human resource management should be watching to see if In-craft PERs will provide enough candidates for anticipated vacancies. If that is not the case, they must move to open In-service announcements. Maintenance craft employees who never applied In-craft for these positions may apply and if successful will rise to the top of the In-service register (s).

What to expect? In-service has two components: review panel and exam (s). Once an employee applies, s/he will be issued a CSA booklet to complete within 21 days. The CSA booklet and the 991 are on our MPWU website on the Maintenance Craft Director's page. Download to your hard drive and save for the future. You print the file and staple into your CSA book.

If you get a book in on time, you will be scheduled for a review panel. A three person panel will interview you for 1 -1.5 hours. They decide on a score and that is transmitted to NTAC electronically. It's kept on file until your exam materials arrive at NTAC. Once your exam is scored, the two elements are merged

and you will get results. If you get ANY NUMERIC score, you are successful and will be on a register. If not, you will simply be scored, ineligible and must wait 365 days to apply again for that position.

I have had a lot of questions on updates lately too. Here are the key things to remember:

1. You must submit evidence of any new training or experience within 30 days.
2. You must have additional training or experience for all KSAs for the position you wish to update. This may take some time if you have more than 2 or 3. The coordinator will keep your evidence on file until you have documented all failed KSAs.
3. Once you submit evidence for all KSAs, the 37 day period starts. That means management has 37 days to get you through the process including review panel, exam and supervisor evaluation if needed. Each KSA requires different components for evaluation and you can see what they are by looking at the "Y"s at the bottom under each KSA number.
4. If you don't have a score back in 37 days, file a grievance. In the corrective action section, state "Upon successful completion" and name the entitlements you might seek such as higher level, out of schedule, and corrected seniority date.

The "burden of proof" is on the employee to satisfy the KSAs. The burden of timeliness is on the USPS. Updates are generally handled by your Maintenance MSS Coordinator.

Good luck to all Update and In-service candidates in the process at the moment.

In solidarity,

Jane

Area 6 Report



Mary Stephenson
Area 6 Director

The Grinch (OIC) Who Stole Christmas

While my original idea was to write up a parody of the Dr. Seuss book and insert evil postal management into the story, what happened to one of our members was too outrageous to treat with humor. (I won't mention the name of the office to protect the privacy of this individual.)

It was Christmas Eve and one of our members was nearing the end of the tour, eagerly anticipating the holidays with family and friends. A call came from management to come to the office. With twenty-two years of seniority and no discipline on file, imagine the surprise when management presented a gift of a 14 day suspension. What was so serious, so heinous, that management needed to present the discipline on the exact day? The discipline was issued for insufficient documentation for an absence.

Had our member blatantly refused to provide documentation? Had our member chosen to defy the management powers that be? No – I had been working with management to try to resolve the issue before discipline was issued. I had personally met with the OIC and gave her the updated medical documentation, from the member's physician, to cover the absence. The OIC said that she would get back to me if any additional information was necessary.

Keep in mind that this is during Christmas at the Post Office. As a postal worker, I work Tour 1. on Tour 1, we have lots of overtime at Christmas. As a mom, I had lots to do to get ready for the holidays and couldn't be tied to a land line. I explained all of this to the OIC and informed her that the best way to contact me was on my cell phone. Easy enough, right? Wrong!

The OIC did call my cell phone twice and hung up both time. When I noticed the second hang up, I called her back. She didn't answer her phone and so, I left her a mes-

(Continued from page 6)

Area 6 Report Continued

sage. When I got to work that night, the OIC had left a nasty message on the Union phone. She said that she refused to call my cell phone because she didn't like my ring back tone. (The ring back tone is "Mary Jane" by Rick James. Offensive – I don't think so." My offensive ring tone was the OIC's excuse for not having further contact with me, as a steward, to possibly avoid issuing the 14 day suspension to our member.

In Dr Seuss' books, there is always a happy ending. The Grinch wasn't able to steal Christmas, even though he tried. In our story, the OIC left the office on Christmas eve day to go on her merry holiday way. While there seems to be no hope for this evil Postal Grinch, only time will tell if the grievance procedure can provide a happy ending for our member.

In Solidarity,

Mary

Letter to the Editor - Open Letter to All

In my time with the Postal Service and the American Postal Workers Union, I spent 25 years trying to inform our members, families, and officers as local editor, state editor, and APWU National Postal Press Association Advisory Board member. I was always in trouble from some quarter for something I had written or spoken (ask Lance Coles, Russ Bugary, or anyone from Indiana), but I just kept going. (They seem to let me, so I did.)

My only problem, after the 2002 National Elections (i.e. Florida and subsequent Bush takeovers), was that I realized that many in the membership either had not read what I had written for 25 years, or did not believe a word of it.

After the overwhelming number of union-minded pages we had published to the membership in our local and state newsletters and web pages all those years, no one seemed to change, or even move a little bit to the left or even to the right of where they had started. Although the Union protected them, it was not important to them to participate, act, or protect it.

The local and state union officers who attended the state and national functions during that time all seemed to be on "the same page" and were highly motivated by the orators of the time: the Biller's, the William's, the Collin's, and the Burrus', etc.

Fired up from the encounters and the speeches at the union functions and activities, the officers and stewards would return home to a tepid workplace. Realizing that the workers on the floor were still failing to rally behind the Union that protected them and actually negotiated their USPS paychecks for them, the returning officers and stewards again became overwhelmed and knocked down with the 'me first'

attitude of the average worker on the floor. Yet, the officers and stewards, new and old, continued.

Then one day you wake up, and the post office is handing you a 30-year, or a 41-year and 11-month, plaque; and you are on your way somewhere. You want to stay and help; but you know deep down that after the next contract, your knowledge of the workplace will already be partly obsolete.

Everyone dreams of retirement, but no one actually retires. How could they? What are they going to do, watch TV or play golf all day? Postal retirement does not provide enough money for anyone to maintain the style of living they have been used to, contract after ratified (arbitrated/bargained) contract. I, myself, have taken a part-time job to supplement my income, but I'm not depressed.

Although I have handed my Union duties to others who are still within the program; I still have the desire, and maybe the need, to participate in the process of the education of the workforce. If I had stayed in the active APWU system and spent a few more years in the Postal Service, I would still be doing what I was doing when I left. My thoughts are that, "It's in the blood, not in some programming." When I went to the movies during my APWU-Postal years, I identified with the good guys. I admired Luke Skywalker, Harrison Ford, Mel Gibson, Morgan Freeman, Kevin Costner, Bruce Willis, and more. They helped people. They solved problems. They overcame adversity (within and without), and they always prevailed in the end-as the good guys always will. "We cannot just believe we are the good guys. We must KNOW that we are and act accordingly.

Michael Hibbard
Satellite Beach, Florida

Postal Employees on Rolls (as of PP 26/07 (December 2007))

	2007	2006	2005
Postal Employees on Rolls	681,013	694,342	702,505
Clerks/Nurses:	202,438	211,991	220,345
City Carriers:	219,651	224,218	226,617
Mail Handlers	57,663	57,261	55,885
Rural Carriers	68,166	66,977	64,981
Motor Vehicle Operators	8,745	8,683	8,677
Vehicle Maintenance	5,427	5,519	5,501
Transitional Employees	11,950	0	1,975
TEs-REC	4,237	5,347	6,707
Casuals	38,743	17,206	13,987
Rural Sub/RCA	59,046	59,329	57,597
Headquarters:	2,887	2,783	2,870
Inspector General	1,147	1,132	860
Supervisors/Managers	32,738	33,279	33,537

Editor's Note: I think it is ironic that PMG Potter has stated on numerous times that he was starting at the top when making cuts to the budget, by cutting the staff at Headquarters. However, as you can tell, it must be someone else's headquarters. Headquarters compliment has actually increased last year, more than 2 years ago.

Retiree Involvement



Al LaBrecque
MPWU Retirees President

Retirees' Dept. Conference. You know what they say about the road to Hell being paved with good intentions? Well, I had every good intention to report nothing but the positive aspects of the Conference held in conjunction with the All-Craft Conferences in Las Vegas, Nov. 5-6. Honestly, the actual substance of the Conference, conducted by outgoing Dir., Doug Holbrook, exceeded my expectations. Every one of our submitted agenda proposals were thoroughly addressed, along with those from other Chapters and participants. I'll get to that.

It was announced that retired past Dir. APWU Maintenance Div., Jim Lingberg, was appointed by President Burrus to fill the Western Region Retiree Delegate vacancy. Once all the niceties of opening the Conference were taken care of, Lingberg informed the assembly that we were, in fact, 'unwelcome party crashers' at the All-Craft Conferences. It seems that Bill Burrus had stated that the Retirees' Dept. Conference was never intended to be included, that the multi-craft conferences were educational in nature, that they were mandated via an amendment to the APWU Constitution. Furthermore, it wouldn't happen again! I viewed it as a slap at Doug Holbrook, who obviously set up the Conference to be held in conjunction with the Craft's Conferences. It was demeaning at best for the dedicated participants. I think a lot of eyes were opened right off the bat.

Still, I wasn't going to dwell on that negative note. It's fixable with a resolution to the 2008 National Convention to amend the Constitution for the Retirees' Dept. Conference to be held in conjunction with the All-Craft Conferences....IF such an amendment gets by the Constitution Committee, and IF the delegates approve the amendment by a 2/3 majority vote. BUT, then I read elected Eastern Region

Retiree Delegate, John P. Richards', report and editorial (included in this issue for your reading pleasure), and so much for my good intentions. The membership (active and retired) has every right to know the unvarnished facts of the APWU leadership's treatment of the Department, the membership, and elected Retiree Delegates. For those who may not know, John Richards is a former APWU Dir. Industrial Relations, and retired past president Pittsburgh Metro Area Local. His report and editorial validates what former Western Region Retiree Delegate, Byron Denton, I and others have been trying to convey since our first encounter as Retiree Delegates to the '96 National Convention.

The Conference: It had more substance and consensus among the participants than any of our pre-convention conferences to date. Doug Holbrook recognized and addressed all our proposals, and permitted liberal, frank discussion on each item. Dir.-elect, Judy Beard, kept busy taking copious minutes, and I think our issues were an enlightening experience for our newly elected Director. Now, I'm curious as to how much latitude our first elected Retirees' Dept. Director will have in implementing those proposals. Michigan was well represented: Charlie Kolhoff, Saginaw and Dorothy Malone, Detroit Local Chapters, and Lynn Walker and I for the State Chapter.

On communications, the proposal to establish a quarterly Dept. Newsletter to inform members of CSRS/FERS C.O.L.A. updates, legislative and political action, and issues pertinent to APWU retirees was well received. Holbrook said the cost of printing and mailing would be researched. It was noted that the APWU News Service Bulletin had eliminated retiree COLA updates the past few years. Actually, it's been a long time since anyone recalls receiving a NSB. It would appear that bulletins have been replaced by APWU.org for updated information from APWU Hq. That sparked discussion over my published contention that many of our retiree members are being left out of the information loop because many, or most, of our older members are not computer savvy, or even own one. I made my pitch for hard copy, but didn't

get a lot of support in the midst of very savvy computer seniors. In spite of that, I stand by my position we need to be mindful a significant part of our retiree members rely on the printed word conveyed by the U.S. Mails! Uh, the active members' bread & butter?!

Promoting the Retirees' Dept. Holbrook advised he had already implemented this proposal. He utilized the APWU PPA editor's mailing list and furnished an advertisement to include in Local and State APWU publications. Holbrook said he'd only seen a couple in papers. I haven't seen one yet. I see a lot of NARFE promotional ads, and retiree breakfast (NOT local retiree chapters) announcements, but no APWU Retirees' Dept. ads, and precious few Local or State Retiree Chapter columns.

Legislative & Political Action. It was generally acknowledged that this was a primary objective of the Dept., and that we should be utilizing the knowledge and abilities of the Dept. Director to actively lobby and provide testimony before Members of Congress. There were strong sentiments expressed to reestablish a Legislative Rally strategy when priority retiree legislation reaches a critical stage. It was also agreed that the APWU Legislative Dept. furnish each Local and State Chapter, and the 5 elected Retiree Delegates an up-to-date Legislative Directory. Brother Holbrook expressed some disappointment regarding the level of our legislative activity. Other delegates related Chapter projects which included manning phone banks to support friendly candidates.

Retirees' Dept. Staffing. Dir. Holbrook agreed with our proposal to staff the Dept. with a full-time technician to provide necessary information and guidance to the volume of retired member inquiries, active members contemplating retirement, to service their needs and/or their survivors. As to our proposal to staff with two OPEIU secretaries, Holbrook said the new IMUS computer system greatly reduced the workload and one secretary was sufficient. It's my contention that with only 28% of the Dept. budget expended after 6 months in 2007, the Dept. 'budget' can well afford the position. In fact, it ap-

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pears that retiree membership dues income far exceeds expenditures in our behalf.

Organizing. Again, Holbrook lamented the lack of progress in organizing Local and State Chapters. The "FREE" one-year membership to retiring members has been extended through 2008. Of 40,156 members of the Retirees' Dept., 23,000 are enrolled in the APWU Health Plan. It begs the question, that if there was no APWU Health Plan requiring Dept. membership, what would our membership totals look like? Only 26% belong to a Local or State Chapter. Of the 40,000+ retiree members, less than 500 are full dues-paying members. A significant number of those are elected office holders at the Local, State, and national levels. Opponents of greater retiree inclusion in the APWU contend retirees should have to pay full per capita if we want minimal privileges. The facts of the matter are that the average APWU retiree simply cannot afford paying full dues on their meager annuities. Retired members PAID THEIR DUES, most for more than 30 years, not to mention building the Union and benefits the critics of retiree inclusion are reaping today! It's evident the gap between those still on the payroll, particularly on the APWU payroll, and retired members is so great they simply cannot relate to our living standard.

Education. Judy Beard has already begun developing programs on Wills & Trusts and issues such as Long Term Health Care, and a number of other issues pertaining to those already retired. It was pointed out that conducting retirement seminars for the active members contemplating retirement and training retirement counselors was a vital function of the Retirees' Dept., although I question that the cost of those seminars should be funded out of the Dept. budget. It's for active members and should be funded from the General Fund. Equal time and effort needs to be devoted to the already retired dues-paying membership, Local and State Chapters.

Utilization of the 5 National Retiree Delegates. The John Richards "report & editorial" accurately depicts the low esteem in which the elected Retiree

Delegates are held by the APWU leadership. I had the opportunity to advise the current elected Retiree Delegates and the Conference that resolutions I had authored over the past 2-3 national conventions addressing greater utilization and fair compensation for the Retiree Delegates were shot down by the Constitution Committee and convention delegates. I further related that of the 5 elected delegates, Byron Denton had been a lone voice on the convention floor supporting those resolutions. I personally had no incentive to seek election to the Central Region Retiree Delegate position only to be treated like a 2nd class member. And, finally, I vowed that I would not be offering a resolution to restore dignity and fair compensation to the position. That ball is in the current elected Retiree Delegate's court now. I've got other windmills to take on.

That's just a thumbnail sketch of our proposals on the agenda. A lot more was addressed. The Dept. under Holbrook has vastly improved communications and furnishing Chapters with pertinent information. Local and State Retiree Chapter lists are now being furnished. The issue of hiring retirees to be employed as "retail associates" in business locations was discussed. Frankly, I'm not sold on this being a sound idea from a Union standpoint.

The "sanitized" Conference minutes don't reflect the exchange I had with Sec.-Treas. Terry Stapelton when he addressed us. I took advantage of the opportunity to introduce myself (he curtly said he knew who I was), because he repeatedly failed to afford me the common courtesy of responding to numerous formal written inquiries regarding implementation of adopted constitutional amendments. He also denied my assertion that he has 'kept his foot on our neck'.

The question was raised regarding H.R. 676, the single payer health insurance plan introduced by Congressman John Conyers-D MI, and how that might affect our FEHBP health insurance, as well as what the APWU position was whether or not to endorse the bill. Hundred of Unions have endorsed H.R. 676 while there's been no known position

stated by the APWU. Dir. Judy Beard is researching the question

A Troublesome Situation exists with all too many of our Locals, including here in Michigan. Members are retiring with absolutely no recognition from their Local Union for their years of loyal membership and service to the Union. Not so much as a "Hello, Good-bye, or Go To...." That's just plain wrong! It's an important "detail" in need of serious attention. Some Locals have not maintained their retirees on a mailing list, even some Locals with a publication. As officers in Locals turn over, retirees, including past officers of that very local, have become the forgotten. I commend those Locals who do recognize their retirees and maintain a continuing link through their Union publications and mailings. For those who fall into the aforementioned category, I challenge you to do something about it!

2008 Leap Year means a year of heightened activity that affects each and every one of us. It's a Presidential and Congressional election year and we had better be involved as a matter of survival. It's a State and National Convention year when delegates become the highest governing body of the Union. It's time to start developing resolutions for any proposed amendments to State, National, and Chapter constitutions. The State Retiree Chapter Convention Call (to be held in conjunction with the MPWU State Convention in Grand Rapids) will appear in the next issue of the "Messenger".

Congratulations to Brother George Griffith who retired Oct. 1, 2007 after 42+ years loyal service as a clerk at the Adrian P.O. and to his Local and State Unions. George and his lovely wife, Sue Griffith, past president of the MPWU Auxiliary, gave many years to their Union, locally and at the State level. You are both deeply appreciated by us 'old-timers' who remember.

May your coming years of well deserved blessed retirement be filled with contentment and good health.

Be Strong!

AL

A Business Agent's Perspective

by: Donald L. Foley

National Business Agent (Maintenance Craft)

Reading a post on www.21cpw.com the other day, I was reminded of something said by the eminent anthropologist Margaret Mead, *"A small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."*

John Richards, former APWU Director of Industrial Relations, currently very active retiree delegate to the National Convention and one thoughtful unionist who seems always to make his decisions on principles reflective of his devotion to the cause of labor, remarked about the genesis of APWU. He noted, *"The facts are that a majority of Postal workers throughout the nation held views [of being satisfied and having doubt for chances to improve]. That what amounted to a mere handful of us . . . were able to pull the strike off, was truly an amazing epiphany and critical turning point in the history of the Post Office Department, as it was known at that time, and the larger Trade Union Movement. Had we been swayed by the majority at that time, the course of history would have been radically different from that which has transpired."*

It could not be clearer. When change is needed, one cannot merely hope for the weight of opinion to reach a majority tipping point. Change is caused – sometimes regardless how well the majority recognizes the need – by the activists. As Brother Richards points out, the 1970 strike was not supported by the majority of postal workers; it was incited and carried out by true unionists who were opposed by some of their own "leaders".

The APWU needs change. Those who have become entrenched in positions of power at the top of this great Union have already changed it, have made it something almost unrecognizable in the top levels of its administration. We now have "leaders" who openly call for the Union to be *"run like a business."* As I have noted previously, the Union is not a business; the corporate model is not becoming to an organization whose purpose is supposed to be service to its

members. Evidence of the corruption of the APWU seems clear enough – It attacks its own bargaining unit employees, seeking to "save money" by taking away job benefits from these workers, also seeking to downsize the workforce by eliminating jobs. It orchestrates the construction of roadblocks to the legitimate interests of its retired members. It pursues salary increases for its top administration office holders on the same theory corporate CEO's employ. It seeks to further insulate national officers by extending the election cycle as well as the Convention cycle. It avoids full disclosure to the members of our financial status by giving contradictory, confusing statements. And, most recently, it seeks to diminish the effectiveness of contract enforcement as if enforcement of contractual rights were not as important as maintaining the financial viability of the administrative top of the organization.

We need change and it will not come from the top – at least the change we truly need will not come from the top.

Unless this Union reinvigorates its democratic roots, it will be crushed under the weight of its top-heavy administration. We need to change the political dynamics of the APWU in order to break up the concentration of power at the top. I have proposed previously that we change some of the parameters of our national officer election process in order to change the political dynamic. One of our major problems is the vast disparity between the incumbents and the challengers in access to the members and more generally in chances of getting (re)elected. The token access represented by the candidates' opportunity to have a tiny article printed in the national magazine is insulting; it accomplishes nothing when compared with the month after month exposure granted incumbents at the expense of the members. The Union should provide the vehicle – at Union expense – for every candidate to have his or her campaign literature delivered directly to every member's home. This would be a national mailing offset by

the elimination of one issue of the national magazine.

The political dynamic could also be changed dramatically by allowing present national officers to challenge other incumbents without risking their own present positions. While this may sound, at first blush, counterproductive, I ask that you think about it. Consider the valuable NBA who wants to make a greater contribution at the headquarters level. In the present system, this usually means he or she curries favor at the headquarters level and waits for the opportunity of an appointment, then becoming the new incumbent when the next election rolls around. Or that same officer, choosing instead to take the chance of challenging the sitting incumbent, faces the weight and money of the administration "team". Rare has it been that a true challenger succeeds. I propose two election cycles of four years each; half the national officer structure would be open in the first part of the cycle and, two years later, the other half would be open. In each of these phases, an incumbent whose office was not open could challenge an incumbent without risking the entirety of his or her career service to the Union.

Each of these proposals costs more money than our process now costs. They will be decried as financially irresponsible and that they would bankrupt the Union. Brothers and Sisters, there are a good many ways we can offset the costs of these proposals (starting at the top-heavy administration) in order to afford a genuine increase in the democracy of this Union. What price is too high to pay to have a democratic Union whose officers are truly accountable to the members and whose rank and file members may have a legitimate chance to challenge the present power structure of the Union in the election process?

The change sought by true union activists who fomented the 1970 strike was the acquisition of full-blown collective bargaining rights. Once gained, those

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A Business Agent's Perspective Continued

rights could only be exercised by full fledged labor unions. In other words, change required structure to implement. And structure costs money. Just as Brother Richards pointed out that the majority of postal workers in 1970 did not specifically support the strike, likewise they would not have readily agreed to contribute the dues money that would become necessary for a full fledged labor union to effectively represent them. Yet that is what we have.

Change to the political dynamics of this Union is essential; it requires structure; and structure costs money. But, the mere fact that a structure costs money should not be sufficient to prevent us from restoring true democracy to the APWU.

Yours in True Union Solidarity,

Don

Note from Mike: I wrote this article, before the Chargers beat Indianapolis, for publication, and it's applicable to you and your student, even if you're not a Chargers fan. However, I thought you all would enjoy seeing this as well, because it really highlights a concept that I've been teaching for years. I would have used a local example but...the Lions need some more time to develop (sorry to all the Lions fans? Here you go.....

This month, I'd like to highlight a real life success story from someone who followed the exact same steps that I encourage all of my students to follow, and it will give him a \$2,200,000 a year salary for the next five years.

For those you not from San Diego, or who aren't NFL fans, the Chargers General Manager A.J. Smith just recently signed a 5 year contract worth \$11 million dollars. But what's interesting about this isn't the salary, since pro-football pays its' players, coaches and managers very well; it's how A.J. ended up in the NFL in the first place that's fascinating.

College Planning

By: Michael Humann
College Planning Coach

A.J. Smith was a health and physical education teacher in Rhode Island twenty two years ago when he left to join pro football full time with the Chargers. When he first decided to get started in the NFL, though, he had no pro football experience. It didn't matter to him, though. Here's what he did: he wrote letters to a number of NFL teams asking for one thing only: the opportunity to work for free. Most ignored him, but one team said yes, and that's all it took. Jim Trimble, the late personnel director of the New York Giants was intrigued enough to contact him back and see what he had to say. Here's what Smith explained, 'What I'd like to do is come work for nothing. I'm not asking for pay, I'm asking for experience; so that the following year, if I'm any good, then at least I could have a letter of recommendation.'

He spent a year with the Giants as a volunteer scout, then moved on to New England (at Trimble's recommendation) as a part time film-grader...for \$3 an hour. He barely made any money, and it apparently cost him money to do the job by the time he had paid his car's gas, but he got his foot in the door. His wife Sue was quoted in the San Diego Union Tribune recently as saying "We never got into this business for him to be a general manager. He was getting into this business to be in something he loved. He would have taken being a janitor. He would have taken any position to get his foot in the door."

And now, he's being paid millions to do something he loves.

So, what's the lesson for you? First, he did exactly what I've been encouraging my students to do for years: take the initiative to contact people in the business or field that you are interested in and offer to work for free, requesting only a letter or recommendation if you perform well just like for A.J. Smith did. Many employers will ignore you or say no....but you only need one to say yes. Then, when you get your opportu-

nity, treat it like you were getting paid. It was reported that Smith clocked in and out on time like a factory worker, even when he was volunteering. If you find that you hate something after a little while, that's great. Now you don't have to waste any more time on that field or career, and you can move on to the next item on the list.

On the other hand, if you find it's something you love, you never know what that first job might turn into. In Smith's case, it was his first 'boss'—the guy he worked for free for---that set up the second job for him; only this time, he was getting paid. And, it led to him becoming the Charger's general manager in 2003 when Bill Butler (the GM before him) died.

Also, I'd say to not begrudge being a rookie. Everybody has to start at the bottom of the totem pole and wage scale. So, don't feel like you're being taken advantage of by working for free. You're not because you're gaining something very valuable to you... experience.

Finally, since you're going to work for decades anyways, you might as well find something that you're passionate about. It's often been quoted that you should 'find something you love to do, and you'll never work a day in your life'; well, this is partially true, you should find work you enjoy, but you have to find something that pays decently as well. Who knows, maybe like A.J. Smith of the Chargers, you'll find something that will ultimately pay you millions for what you would do for free.

Take care,

Mike Humann

Mike Humann is a leading expert on everything related to college, from selecting a career and major, to getting in to your top school, to being able to afford it. You can get a ton more information, at www.collegeplanningcoach.com

NOTE: This is not a free service, we have been given permission to reprint his articles.

Before Their Time: The World of Child Labor

By Peter Rachleff

Professor of History

Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota

Most of us would like to think that child labor, if it exists at all, is merely a vestige of an older economic era, relegated to the margins of the modern economy, lurking in the shadows of economic development and modernization. Surely a potent combination of human rights talk, automation and technological change, the information economy, and 21st century globalization has pushed child labor into the dustbin of history. Surely...

But, as so many say, seeing is believing, and documentary photographer Dr. David Parker offers us plenty to look at, and it's plenty disturbing. Over the past fifteen years, largely on his own dime, Parker has traveled the world, from Peru and Bolivia to Mexico and Nicaragua, from Turkey to India, Nepal, and Bangladesh, from Morocco to Sierra Leone, and many, many places in between. An occupational epidemiologist by training and a largely self-taught photographer (he did take some local classes), Parker has sought out children at work as his subject of choice, and, although gaining access to private workplaces in order to take some photographs might have been challenging, he has found no shortage of scenes to catch his interest.

Viewers of his striking photographs might easily lose track of the particular settings, might easily imagine that these pictures could have been taken anywhere. *Before Their Time* is organized by industries –Agriculture and Husbandry, Mines and Stone Quarries, Brick Workers, Textiles and Other Manufacturing, Street Workers, and Garbage Picking and Begging. Each industry includes photographs from many countries, photographs whose human subjects seem more like each other – brick workers from India, Nepal, Peru, Bolivia, and Nicaragua, for instance – than culturally or physically distinct. Skin tone, facial shape, hair texture, and the like fade in significance, while facial expressions of stress, strain, and seriousness

seem like more compelling common denominators. Even those occasional demonstrations of joy, light-heartedness, yes, childhood, seem manifestations of a common grammar, if not vocabulary, of child labor. Parker's images insist that this is a unifying experience.

And it is an experience growing more common rather than less in the modern global economy. In the late 1970s, the global estimate for child laborers was about 80 million, and scholars were predicting it would be cut in half by 2000. Instead, today there are an estimated 320 million children at work around the world! *Before Their Time* compels us to ask why. This, I would argue, is its greatest service, calling our attention to the tragic reality that child labor is integral to the new global economy rather than a vestige of some past arrangements.

The contemporary global economy is organized by the principles of economic neo-liberalism, a philosophy, a set of organizing ideas and structures, which is anything but "liberal" in the ways that we usually think of the term. Rather, it is "liberal" in the classical, late 18th century, Adam Smith, John Locke, John Stuart Mill, David Ricardo way. It is "liberal" in the ways that the market and its "laws" of supply and demand was construed by its advocates as a liberatory response to the regulatory regimens of the mercantilist and colonial economies. Hence, neoliberal means "freeing" the market from the

burden of government regulations (of trade, labor, the environment, etc.) and the cost of government-provided services. It means reducing the cost of all elements of supply (labor, energy, raw materials, overhead) for the private sector and the cost of government-provided services (and the taxes which fund them). It promotes the regime of "lean and mean" and what Jeremy Brecher, in his book *Global Village or Global Pillage* calls "a race to the bottom." Wages plummet, government-provided safety nets are shredded, state-owned enterprises (railroads, telephones, electric utilities, and the like) are sold off to private bidders, and the funding of public education is slashed.

Some scholar-activists have suggested that neo-liberalism has brought with it a return to what Karl Marx, at the end of Volume I of *Das Kapital*, called "primitive accumulation." Through the enclosure of the commons in Britain, the expulsion of tenants and serfs across Western Europe, and the dissolution of earlier modes of elite obligation to the poor, a new class was created in the 17th and 18th centuries which had nothing to live on but its ability to sell its labor. Today, capital scours the globe in pursuit of cheap labor and "pro-business" environments. Families are compelled to sell as much labor as they can marshal in order to survive, including the labor of their children.

The last round of "primitive accumulation," hundreds of years ago, was witnessed only by those who were in the midst of it. Today's version, thanks to dedicated and talented photographers like David Parker, can be witnessed by all of us. Parker's images are compelling. Many of the young girls and boys look directly into the lens of the camera, and, through it, they make eye contact with us. We witness their humanity, not only as it is being drained, but also as it struggles to express itself, to fight back, to claim its voice. And they ask us: What will you do?

How will we answer?



Best Date to Retire in 2008 (or early in 2009)

By John Grobe

John Grobe is a retired federal employee with over 25 years of experience in federal human resources and President of Federal Career Experts, a training and consulting firm that specializes in federal employee retirement and career transition issues.

I guess it's too late to write a column about the best day to retire this year. Many other writers have beaten me to the punch. In addition, most folks have already set their retirement dates, and their retirement parties are in full swing. This article is for those of you who are biding your time and plan to retire in late 2008 or early 2009 and may be interested in looking at the best dates to retire a year from now.

First and foremost, the best day for you to retire is whenever you feel like it (and meet the requirements). Once you are eligible to retire, you can leave whenever you want. It could be on the first day you are eligible, your birthday, or the day the Cubs win the World Series.

Having said that, many retirees choose to retire near the end of the calendar year. The primary reason for this choice is the ability to get a large lump-sum annual leave payment. Being able to carry over 240 hours of annual leave into the new year and then accrue and additional 200 or 208 hours, can leave one with a large lump sum payment.

The 2008 leave year ends January 3, 2009, anyone retiring on that day (or on January 2nd, if their workweek were complete) would receive 208 additional hours. Someone retiring on December 31st or January 1st would receive 200 additional hours.

The lump-sum leave payment does not have several deductions taken out of it.

Retirement deductions (7% for CSRS and .8% for CSRS Offset and FERS) are not withheld.

Insurance payments are not withheld, as they were withheld out of the last paycheck and will be withheld out of the first retirement check.

TSP payments cannot, by law, be taken out of lump sum leave payments.

Also, the lump-sum leave payment would not be received until the next tax year when, presumably, you would be in a lower tax bracket. Another advantage to retiring near the end of the year is that your lump-sum payment is computed as if you had begun to take the leave on the first workday after you retired and used it until it expired. This way the bulk of the payment would be computed at next-year's salary.

For FERS employees: The best day to retire is December 31, 2008. If a FERS employee were to work even one day in January 2009, he/she would not receive an annuity for that month. A FERS employee who retired on December 31, 2008 would receive their first annuity payment on or about February 1st and the check would cover the month of January. By working as little as one day in January, the first annuity payment would be received March 1st and it would cover the month of February.

CSRS employees whose workweek ends on January 2nd will find January 2, 2009 the best day to retire. They will get paid for the New Years holiday and January 2nd and will receive a pro-rated annuity payment (on or about February 1st) for the remainder of January. CSRS (and CSRS Offset) retirees have the flexibility to retire up through the third of any month and still receive a prorated annuity.

So get out those red pencils and circle your retirement date on the 2008 or 2009 calendar.

Employee Entitlement for/to Service member FMLA Leave Entitlement

Service member FMLA provides eligible employees leave for any one, or for a combination, of the following reasons:

- To care for a covered family member (i.e., spouse, parent, son, daughter or next of kin) who has incurred an injury or illness in the line of duty while on active duty in the Armed Forces, provided that such injury or illness may render the family member medically unfit to perform the duties of the member's office, grade, rank or rating.
- Because of a qualifying exigency arising out of a covered family member's (i.e., spouse, parent, son or daughter) active duty or call to active duty in the Armed Forces in support of a contingency operation plan.

Duration of Service member FMLA

When Leave is To Care For an Injured or Ill Service member: Effective immediately, an eligible employee may take up to 26 work-weeks of leave during a single leave year to care for the service member. Leave to care for an injured or ill service member, either by itself or when combined with other FMLA-qualifying leave, may not exceed 26 weeks in a single leave year.

When Leave is Due to a Qualifying Exigency: An eligible employee may take up to 12 work-weeks of leave during a leave year, in accordance with Department of Labor regulations. The right to such leave will take effect, effective when those regulations are issued and you will be notified when that occurs. Leave due to a qualifying exigency, either by itself or when combined with other FMLA-qualifying leave, may not exceed 12 weeks in a single leave year.

Documentation

For an absence to care for a family member in active duty status who has incurred a serious health condition, medical certification is required to establish that the serious injury or illness was incurred in the line of duty on active duty in the Armed Forces and may render the service member medically unfit to perform the duties of the member's office, grade, rank or rating.

For an absence for a qualifying exigency, certification will be required in accordance with pending Department of Labor regulations.

All Craft Conference and Swearing In

A Special Report and Editorial

By: John P. Richard

Eastern Region Delegate to the National Convention
Pittsburgh Area Retiree Chapter President

Shortly after I was declared elected to the position of Eastern Region delegate to the National APWU Convention, I contacted top APWU Officers to determine if I would be assigned to the conference by the union, and if I would be installed with the rest of the some other 85 elected candidates. I was assured that I would take the oath with the rest of the candidates, and that I would be assigned to attend the conference by the union. I was told that a letter would follow giving the full particulars. A letter from the Secretary Treasurer Stapleton, dated August 31 was received.

The August 31 Stapleton letter stated in part, "You will have a guaranteed room reservation (at the Las Vegas Hilton) arriving Sunday, November 4 through Friday, November 9, 2007."

After standing the registration line for well over an hour, when I got to the desk, I was informed that there was no reservation. Moreover, since the hotel was full, no rooms were available. So there I was, no reservation in a filled hotel, miles from any other hotel, after traveling all day from Pittsburgh! Luckily, the Pittsburgh Metro Local was coincidentally registering their delegates. The clerk that signed them in took my letter to his supervisor. After two long meetings among hotel management, they were able to squeeze me into a room. Shortly after registering, I ran into Brother Stapleton who told me there had been a change in policy, and no rooms were authorized for the five elected retiree convention delegates. Therefore, we had no reservation! After much controversy and protest about that policy, Stapleton later informed the retiree department meeting the next day that the policy had been reversed again, and payment for the rooms was authorized. Nice. What a great way to run a major labor union. Later I had to jump through hoops to have the hotel bill paid, and was denied modest parking and six day meal expenses of \$177.00. I would love to compare these expenses to the expenses of the others that were elected and assigned. You can bet their paid expenses far exceed my modest and miniscule denied Legitimate and Documented expenses.

The Swearing-In

The August 31 letter also stated that the installation would be Thursday evening, "Black Tie", with the color scheme Black and Gold. How thoughtful of them to select Steelers colors! And just before installation, the Steelers will have won a game on Monday night TV over the Baltimore Ravens!

I therefore reported to the appointed place at the appointed tie in my black tux with a gold bow tie with my wife Charlotte, in her new black and gold gown purchased for this event, to await the installation. For what it is worth, there wasn't much other back and gold in the room.

When they began to line up for the introductions, the five Retiree Convention Delegates were no on the list. When I inquired about this omission, I was curtly informed that the Retiree Convention Delegates were intentionally left off the list, and moreover, we would not be permitted to take the oath. As the even proceeded, we were not included in the oath that was administered by Rich Trumka, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO. Therefore, as best as I can determine, we five are the only elected official of the union that were in attendance that were not permitted to take the oath.

Editorial Comment

I had heard "horror stories" over the years about how retirees have been mistreated by the Union. Frankly, without direct knowledge, it seemed to me that the stories might have been exaggerated. But having gone through the events described above, it is obvious that we retirees are held in the lowest esteem, considered to be like a mindless herd of dairy cows that are banned to the field all day then taken to the barn to be milked – OF OUR COPA CONTRIBUTIONS – then sent back out into the field to fend for ourselves. The treatment of the five Retiree Convention Delegates at the conference was, in my opinion, beyond shameful, reflecting an absolute contempt by the APWU leadership for us to have even the tiniest, non-threatening participation in the Union. Beyond endlessly dunning us for COPA contributions, why do they treat us so shabbily? Retirees contribute more than one COPA dollar for every five collected. Maybe it is

time for we retirees to rethink the COPA situation, how the funds are collected, and most importantly, how they are disbursed to further our interests. The record so far is unimpressive.

I have been active in this Union from the day it was created, and for years prior to that in predecessor Post office Unions before the merger. I walked the picket lines in 1970, and was prepared to do so again if called upon by the Union. My skin is not thin, having fought the internal Union wars and battles with management over these many years. I can give as well as take. But I have never been treated so badly by a Union administration that I consider to be friendly toward me. According to Brother Stapleton, the fiasco over the room reservations was due to decisions of President Burrus, my old running mate in 1980. Without any evidence to the contrary, it must be assumed that it was also President burrs who denied the searing in or the five Retiree Convention Delegates. If not he, then who? In any case, such boorish behavior is inexcusable. There is a stench of contempt, indifference and incompetence emanating from this administration insofar as retirees are concerned. I grew up a hard way. We had words to describe those that pick on the least powerful among us. We all know what those words are, and they surely apply here.

When President Burrus read us the riot act at the Retiree Department Meeting, he broadly inferred that he will drastically curtail future All Craft Conferences. It will be instructive to see if he has the political will to follow through, or if he will just decrease or eliminate altogether only Retiree Department meetings. In my opinion, the Retiree Department should be entitled to and be permitted to have the same number of national and/or regional and/or state funded meetings at the other APWU Departments. Will this be Director Judy Beard's first major challenge? Nuff said!

Retiree NOTE: John Richards is a former APWU Director of Industrial Relations, and past President of the Pittsburgh Metro Area Local. I believe it is vitally important that the active and retiree membership in the field is fully informed as to how the retirees are being treated by the parent APWU leadership. It is also validation of what I have been trying to convey over these many years. Yours in Brotherhood, Al LaBrecque

Senior Executive Pay on the Rise

Postmaster General Jack Potter and seven other senior postal officers have received hefty pay increases as a result of changes in the postal reform law.

Potter got the largest increase. His salary increases 39% to \$258,840 a year, up from \$186,600. That's an increase of \$72,240 and is now the maximum allowed a postal officer under the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA).

Deputy Postmaster General and Chief Operating Officer Patrick Donahoe's pay jumps to \$235,000 from \$186,000, a 26% raise, under increases granted by the Postal Service Board of Governors. The increases were disclosed by the Postal Service Jan. 3 in response to a Freedom of Information Act request.

The raises were approved by the governors in May 2007, retroactive to Jan. 5, 2007, under a provision of the year-old PAEA. One section of the act removed the pay of top postal officers from the federal pay cap. That cap requires that the pay of most federal workers remain below the pay of the vice president.

Citing a need to make the executive pay for the Postal Service's top officers competitive with private industry, Congress voted to give the postal governors authority to boost the pay of up to 12 USPS workers up to an amount not to exceed 120 percent of the vice president's total annual compensation. Vice President Richard Cheney is currently paid \$215,700. The other six postal officers and their new and old salaries are:

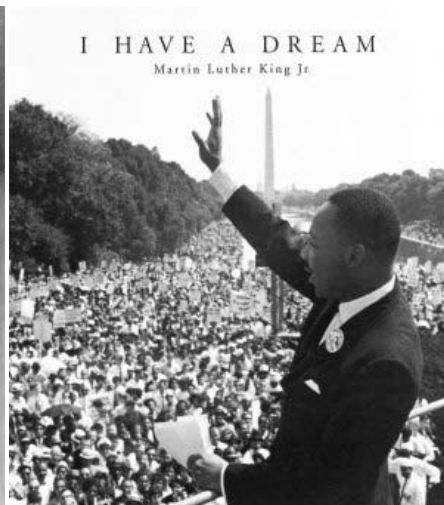
- ✓ Chief Financial Officer and Executive Vice President Harold Walker, \$215,000, up from \$186,000.
- ✓ Chief Human Resources Officer and Executive Vice President Anthony Vegliante, \$225,000, up from \$183,100.
- ✓ Chief Marketing Officer and Executive Vice President Anita Bizzotto, \$225,000, up from \$183,100.
- ✓ General Counsel and Senior Vice President Mary Anne Gibbons, \$215,000, up from \$177,800.
- ✓ Senior Vice President for Operations William Galligan, \$215,000, up from \$183,100.
- ✓ Chief Technology Officer and Vice President Robert Otto, \$205,000 up from \$177,800. (Otto retired Oct. 1, 2007, and has not yet been replaced.)

Potter's pay had been at the same level as cabinet officers, a reflection of the days when the old Post Office Dept. was under control of a presidential appointee. According to the Office of Personnel Management, cabinet officers will be paid \$191,300 this year. In releasing the salaries, Postal Service officials noted that in 2003 the President's Commission on the United States Postal Service had called for making the pay of top postal officers competitive with executives in private industry.

USPS said pay of some corporate executives who manage companies with fewer employees than the Postal Service earn far more than Potter will with his pay increase. Proctor & Gamble chief executive A.G. Lafley, for example, earns \$29 million a year, USPS said. It also noted the pay of two private delivery firms, Federal Express CEO Frederick Smith, who earns \$8.67 million, and UPS's Michael Eskew, who earns \$3.1 million.

USPS also compared Potter's pay with that of other postal chiefs. Deutsche Post of Germany pays Klaus Zumwinkel \$4 million, USPS said. The Netherlands' TNT Peter Baker earns \$2.94 million and the United Kingdom's Royal Mail pays Adam Crozier, its chief executive, \$1.57 million. Australia Post pays CEO Graeme John, \$1.89 million, New Zealand Post pays its CEO, John Allen, \$733,000 and Japan Post pays its president, Norio Kitamura, \$246,737 and Canada Post pays CEO Moya Greene \$483,876.

Potter's new pay will trail that of three other government-created organizations. Freddie Mac's Richard Syron is earning \$11.47 million and Fannie Mae's Daniel Mudd \$7.59 million, USPS said. The Tennessee Valley Authority pays its CEO, Tom Kilgore, \$1.6 million, the Postal Service said.



News You Can Use!

Employment Verification

The US Postal Service now provides basic employment and income verification information to requestors through the TALX Corporation. The Work Number provides automated employment and income verifications. The Work Number provides our employees with quick turnaround service on information. You, the verifier, benefit by receiving immediate access to information that is convenient, accurate and secure. Our standard procedure for verification requests is to provide the following instructions to verifiers on how to use The Work Number. You have two options to get the information you need:

Call 1-800-367-57690, or
http://www.theworknumber.com

Deal reached on bill to compensate feds for unused sick leave

A draft bill that would compensate some retiring federal employees for unused sick leave is getting sweetened.

Retiring employees under the Federal Employees Retirement System would get up to \$10,000 in compensation under the latest version of a bill drafted by Rep. Jim Moran, D-Va., the Federal Managers Association said Monday. Moran's previous draft bill had capped that at \$5,000; however, various organizations argued that this would not be enough to discourage sick leave abuse.

Employees under the Federal Employees Retirement System currently receive no compensation for their unused sick leave when they retire. The bill is meant to discourage them from abusing their sick leave benefits as they near the end of their careers. The Congressional Research Service has said sick leave abuse costs the federal government about \$68 million a year.

Employees under the older Civil Service Retirement System are compensated for unused sick leave, and as a result have far more unused sick leave when they retire.

Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) Update For Employees Covered by the National Agreement and the Operating Services Agreement:

(Updated 02/01/08) In December, the Consumer Price Index (CPI-W) fell to 612.948 (from 613.287 in November). After the fifth month of the six-month measuring period, and assuming the adjustment was made based on the December index point, the next COLA would be \$333 per year, which works out to \$12.80 per pay period or 16 cents per hour. However, the next COLA (the 3rd under the 2006-2010 National Agreement and Operating Services Agreement) will be based on the January 2008 index point, and will be effective March 15, 2008 (pay period 07-2008, pay date April 4, 2008).

Note: The 2006-2010 Collective Bargaining Agreement (page 457) indicates that the 3rd COLA would be effective March 1, 2008 provided the January CPI is released by Feb. 15, 2008, otherwise it will be pay period 07-2008. The US Dept. of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics has announced that the January CPI release date will be Feb. 20, 2008. Therefore, the 3rd COLA under the 2006-2010 National Agreement and Operating Services Agreement will be effective March 15, 2008 (pay period 07-2008, pay date April 4, 2008), as indicated. The 2nd COLA under the 2006-2010 National Agreement was \$686 and was effective Sept. 1, 2007. Under the 2006 National Agreement and Operating Services Agreement, employees have so far received the following adjustments totaling \$686: \$686 (effective Sept. 1, 2007, pay period 19-2007, pay date Sept. 21, 2007); \$0 (effective March 17, 2007, pay period 07-2007, pay date April 6, 2007).

Bush Administration Seeking Changes to FMLA Regulations

According to the Associated Press: The Bush administration is proposing the first changes to regulations in the Family Medical Leave Act in more than a decade. The act allows eligible work-

ers to have up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave in a year for such things as caring for a newborn or a sick family member, or to address a serious health condition. The Labor Department says it has sent the proposed changes to the White House, but won't say what the changes are.

Advocates for the act say they are worried that the administration will try to cut back or weaken protections of the law. They say the government should be working to expand it. But the Labor Department says people already eligible under the act will remain eligible, and that changes will be aimed at stopping people from abusing the system. The changes will be made public once the White House signs off on them. The Labor Department hopes the final regulations will come by the end of the year.

The New York Times reported: Labor Department officials said on Thursday that they had proposed new regulations that address some corporate complaints that workers are abusing the Family and Medical Leave Act. Under the proposals, workers would generally have to call in to request a leave before taking it; currently, employees can take off for two days before requesting a leave. She said the proposed regulations would allow companies to require doctors to recertify annually that a worker has a serious health condition. Under current rules, doctors can provide a multiyear certification that a worker has a serious condition. Although a Labor Department official announced the move through interviews with the Associated Press and The New York Times, the department has not provided any details about its recommendations.

Workforce Management reports: The White House budget office has up to 90 days to review the proposal, but observers estimate that it likely will be published by mid-February in the Federal Register. The public would then have 60 days to comment. Then the Labor Department would issue a final regulation.

More News You Can Use!**Michigan Driver's Licenses**

As of January 22, 2008 the Michigan Department of State will require that all applicants for original driver's licenses and personal identification cards provide proof of legal presence in the United States. Attached is a document that summarizes what is now when applying for an original Drivers License or Personal ID, but essentially applicants must show evidence of the four things:

1. Social Security Number or Ineligibility for Social Security Number
2. Permanent Legal Presence in the United States
3. Identity (name and date of birth)
4. Michigan Residency

For more information please visit www.michigan.gov/sos/

Transition to Digital Television

As mandated by Congress and Directed by the FCC, analog television broadcasting will cease on February 17, 2009. Which means, citizens that rely on an over-the-air signal and do not have cable or satellite will have to take steps to transition to Digital Television:

- Acquire and install a digital-to-analog converter. This will allow their existing analog television to receive and display digital broadcast signals.
- Acquire a new television with built in digital tuner
- Subscribe to cable or satellite television service, where available.

To help with the costs, the US Government is offering a converter box coupon program -and all households in the country will be eligible to request up to two coupons, worth \$40 each - to be used toward the purchase of up to two (2) digital-to-analog converter boxes. For more information please visit <http://www.michigandtv.com/> or <https://www.dtv2009.gov/>

Responsible Fatherhood Month

"Fathers are critical to helping children have better outcomes," said Duane Michael Wilson, who directs the Michigan Department of Human Services Proud

Fathers-Proud Parents program. "While the importance of a mother's role in parenting goes without dispute, the role of the father is not always viewed as being vital. Males parent differently and we know children benefit as a result. There's a strong connection between the absence of father involvement and issues like juvenile delinquency, teenage pregnancy, academic performance and poor social skills." February 2008 is Responsible Fatherhood Awareness Month for the second year.

APWU Members Can Access, Update Personal Information Online

APWU members can now access and change their personal contact information with the union online when they visit www.apwu.org.

The updating process is simple and secure. Look for *Members Only* just under the blue page header, and select *My Local & Personal Info*. This will take you to on log-in page. Follow the log-in instructions to access your member-profile page.

On your personal page, on the left-hand side, you will see *My Profile*. When you click your name, you will be directed to a page with your personal contact information, including mailing address, e-mail address, and home phone number.

Select *Edit* in the row of buttons near the top of the page and you will be presented with an interactive form. Make any changes you feel are necessary, and then click the *Submit* button.

The information will be updated immediately.

Your *My Profile* page also feature links to information about your APWU local and your regional and national union officers. Remember that you can also use www.apwu.org to register for many conferences and events sponsored by the national union.

Annual Leave Exchange - Erroneous Rejection Letters

Approximately 527 employees have received Annual Leave Exchange Program rejection letters in error. The erroneous letters are dated January 17, 2007. Copies of the rejection letters were forwarded to the Benefits and Compensation Office in Greensboro. The problem was fixed and the correct letters were generated for the ALE Program.

Cases reviewed to this point associated with the erroneous letters revealed that the employee did in fact receive the annual leave exchange payment on their pay period 2/2008 salary check.

If you receive queries concerning the Annual Leave Exchange program rejection letters dated January 17, 2007, ask the caller to check their pay period 02/2008 earning statement. If they qualified for the payment but did not receive it on their pay period 02/2008 earning statement, call the help desk.

Multiple PS Form 50's for PFP Letters

HCES has generated multiple copies of the Form 50 PFP letters. There were no incidents of duplicate processing. The cause is being investigated. There no need to call the Help Desk on this issue.

Employees received 2 copies: 19,406
 Employees received 3 copies: 1,357
 Employees received four copies: 9
 Employees received five copies: 4
 Employees received six copies: 2

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE AND T

RE: LMOU FOR OFFICES WITHOUT A LOCAL UNION STRU

I. PREAMBLE

This Local Memorandum of Understanding (LMOU) was discussed and developed by the parties pursuant to the MOU Re: LMOUs for Offices without a Local Union Structure, agreed upon in the 2006 National Agreement. It is entered into by and between the United States Postal Service (Employer) and the American Postal Workers Union (Union) and shall become effective thirty (30) days from the date signed by the parties and will extend through the life of the 2006-2010 National Agreement.

II. DEFINITIONS

A "local union structure" is defined as a chartered union local acknowledged by the Union at the national level, with established officer structure, including but not limited to, a local president, local vice-president, secretary-treasurer and properly certified shop steward(s).

III. APPLICABILITY

This model LMOU shall be applicable to offices of the United States Postal Service, wherever located throughout the nation, where: 1. there is no local union structure; and 2. there are APWU represented employees.

This model LMOU shall not supersede existing LMOUs currently in effect, unless the local Employer and State President or National Business Agent agrees to replace their current LMOU with this model LMOU. If both parties do not agree to replace the existing LMOU, then the existing LMOU shall stand for the duration of the 2006 National Agreement.

1. Additional Or Longer Wash Up Periods (Item 1) Wash-up time, if applicable, will be administered in accordance with Article 8.9 of the National Agreement.

2. Guidelines For Curtailment OR Termination of Postal Operations (Item 3) When the decision has been reached to curtail or terminate postal operations, to the extent possible, the

Employer will notify the Regional APWU Coordinator or designee of this determination. The Regional APWU Coordinator or designee will provide the installation head in writing with the name and contact information, as soon as practicable.

3. Formulation of Local Leave Program (Item 4) The local leave program shall be administered in accordance with Article 10 of the 2006 National Agreement and Section 510 of the Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM).

4. The Duration of The Choice Vacation Period(s) (Item 5) and Determination Of The Maximum Number Of Employees Who Shall Receive Leave Each Week During The Choice Vacation Period (Item 9)

- a. The maximum number of days off during choice vacation is governed by Article 10, Sections 3.D.1 and D.2 of the 2006 National Agreement.
- b. A choice vacation calendar will be placed on the employees' bulletin board no later than February 1.
- c. Choice vacation selections shall be made by seniority, among all APWU represented bargaining unit employees.
- d. Choice vacation period shall be from April 1 through November 30.
- e. February 15, shall be the final date for employees to submit their request(s) for choice vacation period (s). If the employee desires a copy of the approved leave request, the employee must submit the request in duplicate.
- f. For choice vacation selections only, one (1) APWU represented bargaining unit employee will be allowed off each week during the choice vacation selection period.
- g. In order to maintain the efficiency of its operations and to ensure that APWU represented bargaining unit employees are afforded maximum opportunity for choice vacation selections, consistent with Para-

graph 4.a above, the APWU and the USPS agree to backfill, if deemed necessary, for vacationing bargaining unit employees by utilizing the following pecking order:

- i. Qualified APWU bargaining unit employees at the straight-time rate of pay, in the installation;
- ii. APWU bargaining unit employees at the straight-time rate of pay from other installations pursuant to the Hub Clerk MOU, if practical;
- iii. Postmaster Relief (PMR) from other installations. Note that PMR usage, in this instance is for the sole purpose of annual leave coverage during the choice vacation period and in this limited circumstance only, may be utilized to work the window operations. This agreement cannot be cited in any forum as a basis for arguing that the PMR position or PMR work is within or should be within the bargaining unit and does not in any way change the definition of PMR as outlined in ELM Section 419.3, modify the national award in Case No. Q94C-4Q-C 96081517, acknowledge the duties assigned are bargaining unit work nor acknowledge that the PMR position should be in the bargaining unit.
- h. The installation head/designee shall post the approved vacation schedule no later than March 1.
- i. Upon request, the installation head/designee will provide the APWU Regional Coordinator/ designee with a copy of the completed vacation planning schedule.

5. The Determination of The Beginning Day Of An Employee's Vacation Period (Item 6) The choice vaca-

THE AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO CTURE

tion period shall start on the first day of the employee's basic work week pursuant to Section 10.3.E of the 2006 National Agreement. Exceptions may be granted by agreement among the employee, the union representative and the Employer.

6. Whether Employees At Their Option May Request Two Selections During The Choice

Vacation Period, In Units Of Either 5 Or 10 Days (Item 7)

Employees may request two selections during the Choice Vacation Period in units of five (5) and ten (10) days or one selection of fifteen (15) days, pursuant to Section 10.3.D of the 2006 National Agreement. The total leave approved cannot exceed the ten or fifteen days above.

7. Whether Jury Duty And Attendance At National Or State Conventions Shall Be Charged To The Choice Vacation Period (Item 8), and Annual Leave To Attend Union Activities Requested Prior To Determination Of Choice Vacation Schedule Is Part Of The Total Choice Vacation Plan (Item 20)

- a. Pursuant to Section 10.3.F of the 2006 National Agreement, an employee who is called for jury duty during the employee's scheduled choice vacation period or who attends a National, State or Regional Convention (Assembly) during the choice vacation period is eligible for another period provided this does not deprive any other employee of first choice for scheduled vacation and does not interfere with the needs of the service.
- b. Annual leave approved to attend other union activities prior to the granting of Choice Vacation Period will be charged to the Choice Vacation Period.

8. The Procedures For Submission Of Applications For Annual Leave During Other Than The Choice Vacation Period (Item 12)

The remainder of the employee's accrued annual leave may be granted at other times during the year, as requested by the employee, if approved by the installation head/designee.

9. Light Duty Assignments (Items 15, 16, 17)

Light duty will be administered in accordance with Article 13 of the 2006 National Agreement.

10. Overtime Desired List (Item 14)

Overtime Desired List (OTDL) shall be established in accordance with Article 8 of the 2006 National Agreement.

11. Employee Parking (Item 19)

If available and authorized by the installation head, non-designated vehicle parking spaces may be utilized by APWU bargaining unit employees, on a first come, first served basis.

12. Seniority, Reassignments and Posting (Item 22)

When it is necessary to change, abolish and/or revert a duty assignment, the installation head/designee shall notify the APWU Regional Coordinator/designee, in writing of this determination.

This LMOU for MAL offices expires on November 20, 2010.

Upgrades and New Pay Schedule Effective Feb. 16, 2008

(02/01/08) All APWU-represented employees covered by the 2006-2010 APWU-USPS collective bargaining agreement will be upgraded one pay level effective Feb. 16, 2008. The upgrades are being implemented via new pay schedules.

The new pay schedules reflect pay increases of approximately 2.6 percent from the old levels to the new ones. Generally, employees will move to the same step (for example, Grade 5 Step G employees will be promoted to Grade 6 Step G) and will carry their step waiting time with them. So, if a Grade 5 Step G employee was due an increase to Step H on March 15, 2008, the employee will still receive their step increase on March 15, 2008. Some upgrades from Grade 3 to 4 and Grade 7 to 8 will result in shorter waiting periods. A special procedure described below applies to employees who were in Grade 9 as of Feb. 15, 2008.

Multi-Grade Promotions

The new schedule eliminates three old pay grades: Grades 1, 9, and 10

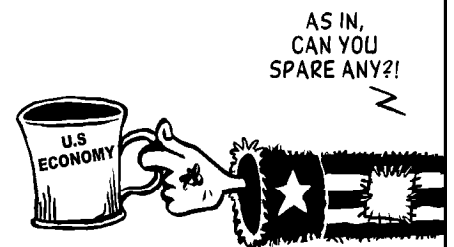
Grade 1: As of Feb. 15, 2008, only a small number of employees were assigned to Grade 1. They will be promoted to the new Grade 3. The new schedule starts at Grade 3, which is the upgrade of the old Grade 2.

Grade 9: Approximately 250 employees who were in Grade 9 as of Feb. 15, 2008, will be promoted to the new Grade 10, which is the upgrade of the old Grade 11.

Grade 10: As of February 2008, there are no employees in Grade 10. Employees in Grade 9 will not be promoted to the same step in Grade 10. Instead, they will be slotted by a two-step process. First, the Postal Service must identify the salary that would have been attained had Grade 9 been retained and upgraded to Grade 10, an increase of approximately 2.6 percent. For example, a Grade 9, Step H employee would have attained a salary of \$50,885 if he or she had been upgraded to Grade 10. Second, the Postal Service must identify the salary in the new Grade 10 that is closest to but not less than that amount. In this case, that would be new Grade 10

Step E, with a salary of \$51,109. This is an increase of slightly more than 2.6 percent. Upon reaching the top step of Grade 10, the employee would realize the value of a multi-grade promotion.

"This Election Is About Change!"
-Barack Obama



With your new pay raise, remember to give to COPA.

HICK

*2008 Michigan Postal Workers Union
21st Biennial Constitutional, Retiree, & Auxiliary Convention
May 15—17, 2008
Crowne Plaza Hotel and Conference Center
Grand Rapids, Michigan*

CONVENTION CALL

The 21st Biennial Convention of the Michigan Postal Workers Union will convene on May 15, 2008 at 9:30 a.m. at the Crowne Plaza Hotel and Conference Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan and will adjourn at the conclusion of business on May 17, 2008

Costs:

Hotel: \$89.00 (plus 15% taxes (total price includes self-parking)

Registration: \$75.00 per delegate

- ⇒ Resolutions need to be submitted to and received by Executive Secretary Harold Juhl by April 15, 2008.
- ⇒ A list of all delegates attending the convention need to be submitted to the Executive Secretary by April 15, 2008.

Article 7 of the MPWU Constitution states: "Time of the Convention and Election of Officers"

Section 1: The Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, shall convene the same year as the National Convention of the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, on any Thursday, Friday, and Saturday in April or May. In any week except that which precedes Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Mothers Day, or Memorial Day.

Section 2: It shall be the sole responsibility for the State Union to plan and expedite the proceedings of the Convention, including suitable and ample accommodations for delegates. It shall further be the responsibility of the State President to appoint two (2) members of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO, and the President of the State Convention Committee to work with any Local who represents the Convention location as voted under Article 7, Section 5. The financial responsibility of the State Convention shall be solely that of the Michigan Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO.

Section 3: The Convention shall convene at 9:30 a.m. on the first day and recess at 11:30 a.m., immediately after the committee assignments and reconvene at 3:00 p.m. This time is to be utilized for official use by the committees. The Convention shall remain in session until completed.

Section 4: Nominators for, all candidates for Executive Board positions shall be the last order of business, Friday of the Convention. No candidate shall be allowed to run for more than one (1) office. Any nominee must accept or decline a nomination for office prior to the closing of nominations. Convention Delegates as well as the Convention City shall be the first order of business on Saturday, 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. shall be reserved exclusively for purpose of caucus.

Section 5: The election of Officers will take place at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday of the Convention. A President, Secretary Treasurer, Executive Secretary, Director of Education, Human Relations/Compensation Director, Legislative Director, Editor, (3) Craft Directors, Area directors, Convention Delegates, plus Convention City, will be elected at this time, by secret ballot.

Section 6: [A] The three (3) Craft Directors shall be elected by secret ballot in accordance with Section 5 above, but Craft Directors shall be elected from delegates from their Craft only. [B] Area Directors shall be elected by secret ballot from delegates, present from their Area only. If a Craft or Area Director is not represented by at least one delegate to the Convention, or if there are no candidates from a specific Craft or Area, for the position of Craft or area Director, then the President shall appoint a member of that Craft or Area to that position, with the advise and consent of a majority of the Executive Board. [C] If after three (3) ballots have been cast, a tie exists, a toss of a coin will break the tie.

Section 7: All terms of office shall be from the date of the certification by Election Committee, until the conclusions of the elections, at the next scheduled MPWU State Convention.

Section 8: Any retired member, who is paying full dues to their Local Union, may hold office in this Union. Any retired member who retires from State Office, can at the discretion of the Present, be used in an advisory capacity.

In addition, **Article 10 (Representation), Section 1**, states: Each Local Union or Area local affiliated with the MPWU shall be entitled to representation in the State Convention on the following basis: All locals shall receive one delegate for each twenty (20) members or any portion thereof. To be computed on the basis of the previous twenty-four (24) month's average paid membership. In addition, no Local may pay more than three (3) months back dues at one time, prior to the State Convention.

An Official Convention call for the Retirees and Auxiliary will be sent out in the March/April 2008 Edition of the Michigan Messenger

Shop, Spend, and Support Locally!

Why Shop Locally!

This question is best answered by Michael H. Shuman, author of the book *Going Local*. "Going local does not mean walling off the outside world. It means nurturing locally owned businesses which use local resources sustainably, employ local workers at decent wages and serve primarily local consumers. It means becoming more self-sufficient and fewer dependants on imports. Control moves from the boardrooms of distant corporations and back into the community where it belongs."

Significantly more money re-circulates in your own area when purchases are made at locally, owned, rather than nationally owned, businesses. Money is kept in the community because locally-owned businesses often purchase from other local businesses, service providers and farms. Purchasing local helps grow other businesses as well as the local communities' tax base.

Top 10 Reasons to Shop, Spend, and Support Local First

1. **Significantly More Money re-circulates in Your community!** When you purchase at locally owned businesses rather than nationally owned, more money is kept in the community because locally-owned businesses often purchase from other local businesses, service providers and farms. Purchasing local helps grow other businesses as well as your community's tax base.

2. **Non Profits Receive Greater Support.** Non-Profits receive greater support from local business owners than they do from non-locally owned businesses.

3. **Unique Businesses Are An Integral Part Of Our Distinctive Character.** The unique character of your commu-

nity is what brought us here and will keep us here. Our tourism businesses also benefit.

4. **Environmental Impact Is Reduced.** Local businesses make more local purchases requiring less transportation and usually set up shop in town centers rather than on the fringe. This generally means contributing less to sprawl, congestion, habitat loss and pollution.

5. **Most New Jobs Are Provided By Local Businesses.** Small local businesses are the largest employers nationally.

6. **Customer Service Is Better.** Local businesses often hire people with more specific product expertise and they invest in their employees for better customer service.

7. **Local Business Owners Invest In Community.** Local businesses are owned by people who live in this community and less likely to leave, and more invested in the community's future.

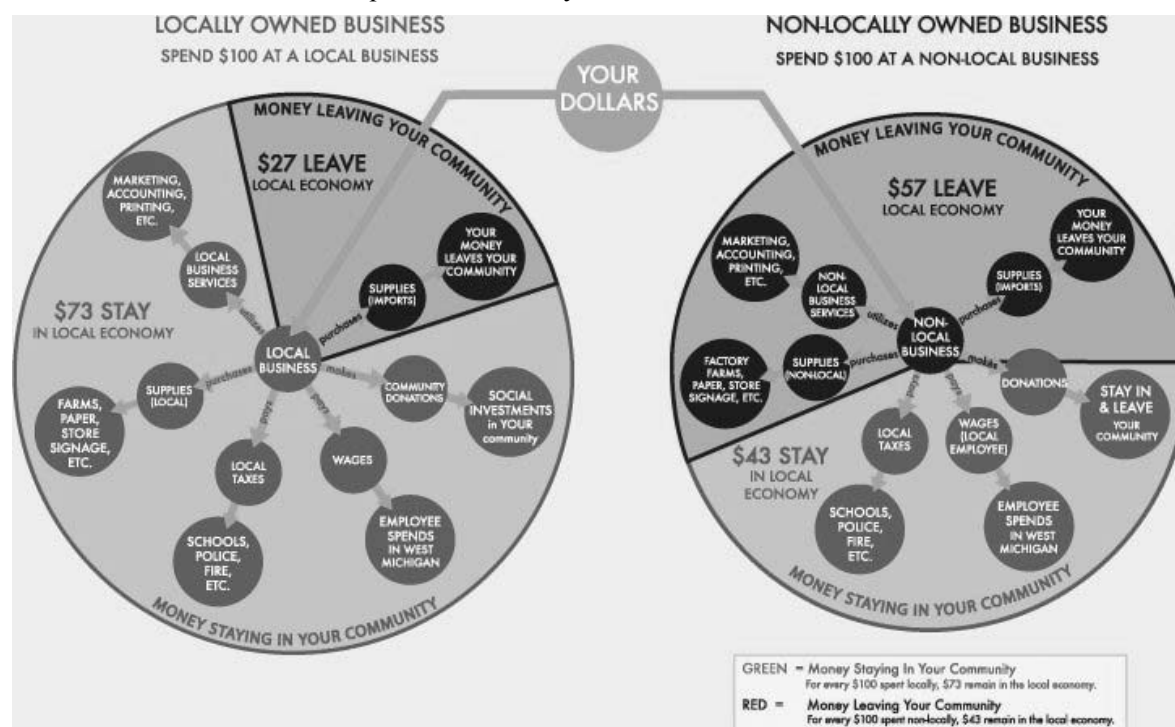
8. **Public Benefits Far Outweigh Public Costs.** Local businesses are owned by people who: Live in this community; are less likely to leave; and are more invested in the community's future.

9. **Competition And Diversity Leads To More Consumer Choices.** A marketplace of thousands of small businesses is the best way to ensure innovation and low prices over the long-term.

10. **Investment In Your City/Community Is Encouraged.**

A growing body of economic research shows that in an increasingly homogenized world, entrepreneurs and skilled workers are more likely to invest and settle in communities that preserve their one-of-a-kind businesses and distinctive character.

Editor's Note: As a union, our goal is to organize and ensure that the standard of the middle class is upheld and prospered. We need to support our local businesses. Otherwise, places like Wal-Mart will spring up in your community, and take down the small, local business. We need to ensure that it doesn't happen. Even if you have a Wal-Mart, or something similar in your community, you can still make a difference by having you and encouraging others to shop locally owned businesses, you will make your own stand against these giants and just maybe, make them take notice by hitting them in their proverbially wallets.



The holidays are a distant memory and thoughts of spring break and perhaps a glimpse of the sun occupy our minds. If there is such a thing, this is the slow time for union activities. Local negotiations, local and national elections, contract ratification and the end-of-year fiscal audit are all behind us. This gives us the opportunity to take stock of where we are and chart the course for the future of this local.

The financial position of this local is good. Hard work on holding the line financially and circumstances that worked in our favor have allowed us to build an adequate reserve of cash and the money necessary to operate the local. This resulted in my being asked at the last meeting if a dues rebate or freezing of the dues increase are in order. I admitted that our Secretary-Treasurer and I have debated this topic several times during the preceding six months. The executive board agreed to examine our finances and arrive at a recommendation. In our Secretary-Treasurer's report, we will expound on the facts that must be considered and their effect on arriving at a decision.

This is not a broken record, but once again, we were fortunate enough to have a meeting with Congressman Stupak over the concerns here at the Gaylord post office. He is fully committed to our obtaining an AFCS (advanced facer canceller system) and the attached BDS (biological detector system) to process collection mail. He is further committed to additional equipment necessary so we can provide excellent service to our friends and neighbors in the 497 area. I made initial contact with him over my concerns over the lack of family friendly policies toward sick leave by the Postal Service. Congressman Stupak was very receptive to my ideas and I agreed to provide him a written outline with supporting documentation that he could use to pursue this cause. After this, Amy and I were able to speak with Bart and his lovely wife at length over postal, veteran, and working family concerns. We are extremely fortunate to have a representative that is so in touch with the "little guy" and is willing to fight for us.

I am waiting on a contract proposal from Golden Dental. We had hoped to have it available for our January meeting, but it

was delayed due to the holidays. They have an associate dentist in Grayling and are trying to secure another in Gaylord as part of this proposal. When a proposal is obtained, we will discuss it at a general meeting.

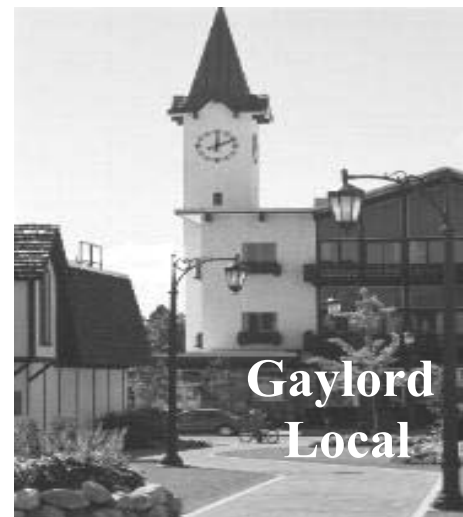
A final thank you for those that attend the membership meetings, for it is you who are the key to the local's success. Always a lot going on with the Alpine local, but I will leave room for Amy's article.

John

A new year is upon us. We concluded our first general membership meeting of 2008. Welcome to our new officers. President, John Marcotte, V-P, Linda Hart, Sec/Tres, Amy Owen, T1 Steward Rich Lemorie, T2 Steward Blane Wayslewski, T3 Steward, David Oliver, and Boyne City Steward, Dan Verkerke. We look forward to working together this year to make our local the best that it can be for our members.

With two raises pending, the idea of freezing our local dues has been discussed. As the person that pays our bills, I would like you to consider our expenses. In the past 4 months we only had a \$150 net gain. Expenses that included: 2 Town Hall Meetings, Membership meeting, elections, and 1 delegate to the National Convention. We have new stewards and executive members that need training. Each training conference will cost this local about \$1,000 per person that attends. This is valuable training and education for these officers, but it does come at an expense to our membership. Defending our contract is not something you learn overnight or that you should put a price tag upon. It will take several conventions or workshops to properly educate our officers as the rules change frequently. December will be an expensive month for us each year. We rebate our officer's dues. \$3,500. Christmas dinner, \$850. Expenses in these amounts decrease our balances quickly, so keep them in mind.

Members do not be afraid to ask to speak to your steward. If you have any question about a situation or circumstance, ask your steward. It could be leave, overtime, work



assignments, or discipline. It is much safer to ask for their help in advance than to try and undo something. Talk to your steward and create a friendship before you need the relationship. Their job is difficult, and usually thankless, but they will be defending you in good and bad times.

Thank you to Larry Miller who came to our office and did a custodial staffing in November. National APWU sent Larry to verify our staffing. He spent a week measuring, counting, and verifying our custodial work. We are reviewing the package and hope to meet with management about it.

Let me conclude by begging you as union workers to support your brothers and sisters. I recently bought a new car. It was important to me that I had an American made car built by UAW workers in the USA. I was told by many salesmen that I was being foolish. I may be one person, but I believe that even my purchases will make a difference. I was shocked to find out how few cars are even assembled in our country. GM and Ford have written clauses into their parts contracts giving preference to Mexico and China. If we continue to buy from other countries, we are the ones to blame for the lost jobs, not the companies. Take the time to check where items are manufactured and buy Made in the USA whenever possible. It's our future.

In Solidarity,
Amy K. Owen



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The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Editor, the MPWU, the APWU or the Postal Press. Any and all correspondence to the Editor may be sent to: Michael Long, Editor, PO Box 280, Sheridan, MI 48884-0280; fax to: 616-776-1536; or e-Mail to: mpwueditor@yahoo.com

Your articles are welcome! They must be signed to be printed, but your name will be withheld upon request. Articles sent via electronic media will be treated as being signed. Be aware that articles may be edited to fit the confines of this publication.

Lastly, this paper is designed with everyone in mind, please be aware that all mistakes are intentional for the express purpose of keeping those happy that are most happy when finding errors in others.



The Michigan Postal Workers Union proudly represents the Members at Large within the Great State of Michigan. The following locals have also affiliated with the MPWU for training, education and information sharing between their members, stewards and officers of their own local and others throughout the state and nation:

Alpena	Battle Creek
Central MI	Detroit
Farmington	Flint
480-481	498-499
Gaylord	Hillsdale
Jackson	Ludington
Manistee	Muskegon
Petoskey	Pontiac
Roger City	Saginaw
Sault Ste Marie	Traverse City
Southwest Michigan	Troy Local
Western Michigan	

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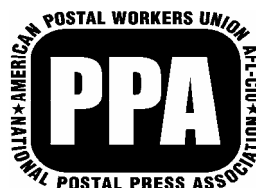
Upcoming Events to Plan For:

May 15 - 17, 2008 - MPWU State Convention, Grand Rapids, MI

August 18 - 22, 2008 - National APWU Convention, Las Vegas, NV

Area 4, 5, & 6 District Meeting - Currently being planned for Fall 2008

June 12 - 14, 2009—MPWU Educational Convention, Bay City, MI



Celebrating & Educating for Black History Month

Quiz Your Knowledge of Black History!

1. According to Several Pamphlets in this famous collection, between 1881 and 1900, about how many African Americans died as a result of mob violence?
 - a. 1 every two months
 - b. 92 per year
 - c. 10 per year
 - d. 12 every week
2. One estimate of how many people worked on the Underground Railroad is:
 - a. Three thousand
 - b. Thirty thousand
 - c. one million
 - d. three hundred
3. When the conflict over abolition was ended with the Civil War, what did African-American demonstrators outside the White House say was the one thing more that they needed?
 - a. The Right to Vote
 - b. The Right to Protest
 - c. Farms
 - d. Jobs
4. Sixty Years after the Civil War ended, what federal program helped to preserve the oral histories of people who have been slaves?
 - a. The CIA
 - b. The WPA
 - c. The TVA
 - d. The Library of Congress
5. Who came before Rosa Parks in protesting the segregation of public transportation?
 - a. Susan B. Anthony
 - b. Frederick Douglass
 - c. Sojourner Truth
 - d. Maya Angelou
6. What was it that made Nat Turner lead his famous revolt in 1831?
 - a. Too many whippings.
 - b. Having his children sold
 - c. A series of visions from Satan
 - d. A series of visions from God.
7. What famous black leader said, "That grave, one-sided justice will not do. The poor call for consideration, too!?"
 - a. Marcus Garvey
 - b. Nelson Mandela
 - c. Martin Luther King, Jr.
 - d. Tupac Shakur
8. How did Martin Luther King Jr. think African Americans should meet the physical force thrown at them by discrimination?
 - a. With brute force
 - b. With soul force
 - c. With a negro police force
 - d. With peaceful protests
9. What were the men at the Million Man March supposed to do right after they took the pledge?
 - a. Raise a fist
 - b. Contribute to their communities
 - c. Hug their brothers
 - d. Hug their families
10. What's the spirit behind the last line of the poem recited at President's Clinton's first inauguration?
 - a. Patriotism for the US
 - b. Confidence in President Clinton
 - c. Respect for our Government
 - d. Optimism for new beginnings
11. Describe two habits of Nelson Mandela that show his serious dedication to achieving his goals.
 - a. An eating regime and exercise
 - b. Praying and Bible reading
 - c. Weekly fasts and long walks
 - d. Enjoying poetry and music
12. Who dreamed of becoming a Shakespearean actor?
 - a. Marcus Garvey
 - b. Nelson Mandela
 - c. Martin Luther King, Jr.
 - d. Tupac Shakur
13. Escaped Slave and abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, published the North Star. In it, he said there were how many slaves?
 - a. 1 million
 - b. 30,000
 - c. 2.5 million
 - d. 3 million

Answers located at the bottom of Page 15.

Questions and Answers provided by AT&T Knowledge Center

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